NUMBER 1 • 35 CENTS
A Fawcett Publication

Official BASEBALL ANNUAL®

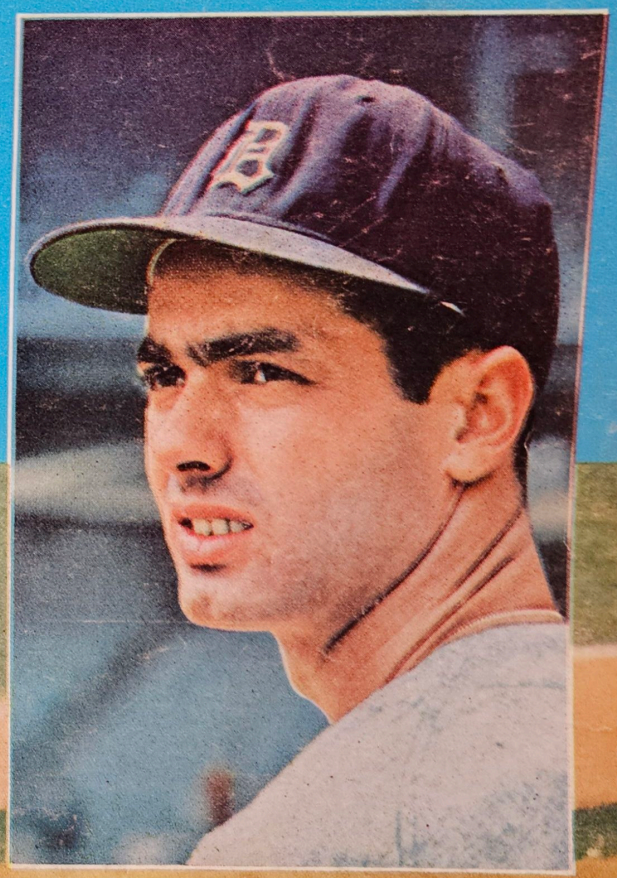
Mantle and Maris rate each other

Special! Lowdown on the Giant troublemakers

What they're whispering about Stengel

Exclusive! How the Reds stole the pennant

Expert forecast of all the teams

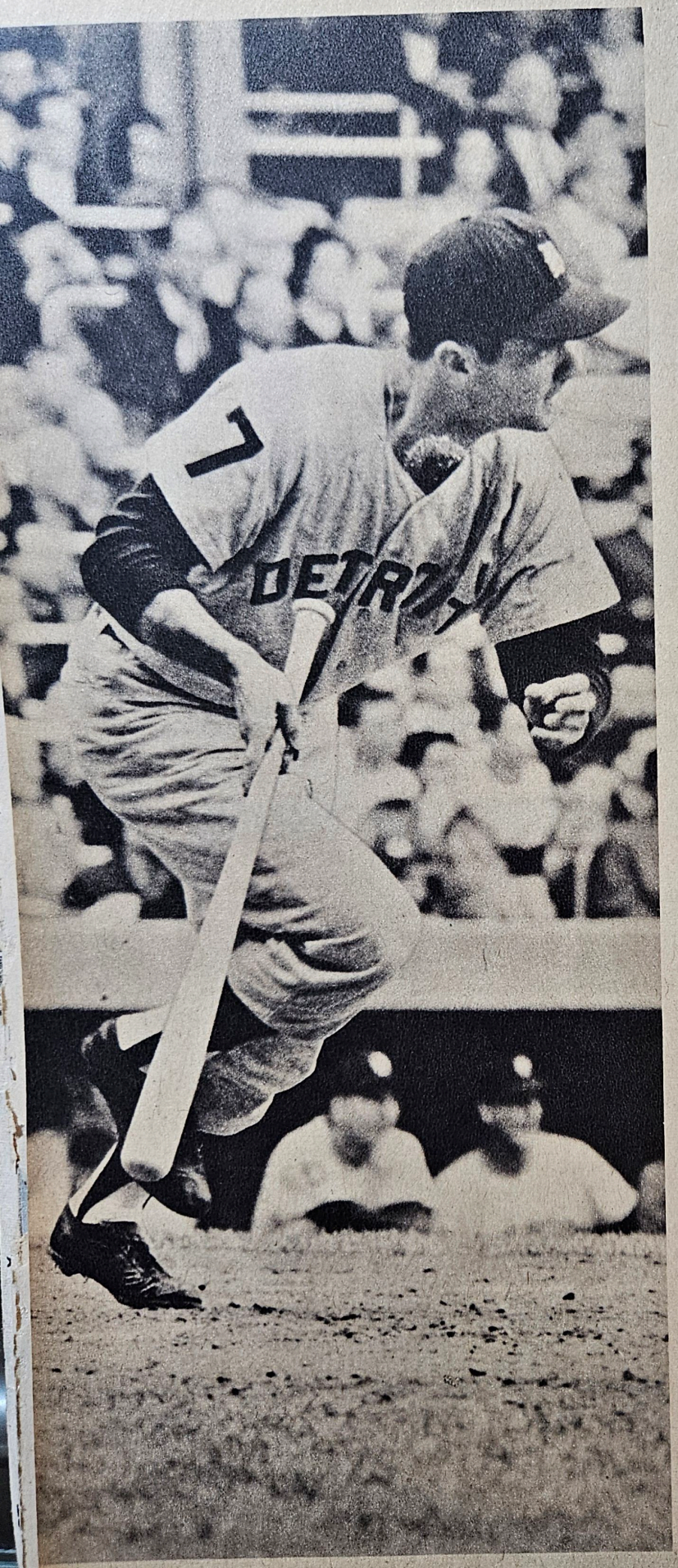


The tense world of Rocky Colavito

OFFICIAL BASEBALL ANNUAL

A Fawcett Publication

BY BOB MARKEL



THE TENSE

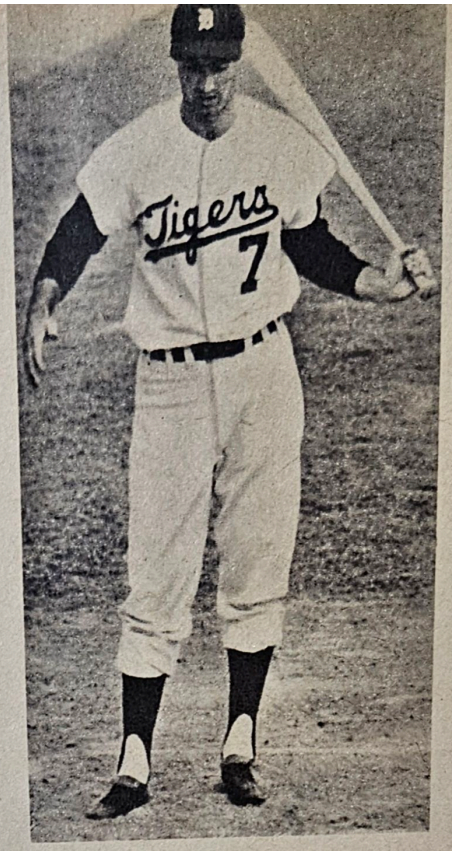
THE MAJOR LEAGUE baseball player, like the expensive Swiss watch, has a tightly wound inner spring which makes him tick. In the case of one Rocco Colavito, whose profession it is to play the outfield for the Detroit Tigers, that inner spring is wound just a little more tightly than most.

Only last season, another typically tense one for Rocky, trying to make up for that first disappointing year in Detroit, Colavito committed one of the cardinal breaches of big league etiquette. In the middle of a game, Rocky abandoned the playing field and joined the spectators. The fact that it was for a good reason doesn't change the fact that in a moment such as that one, Colavito, in his very own words, "didn't stop to think."

"I looked up," said Rocky recalling the incident recently, "and I saw my father swinging. I started to move on up. It was a reflex."

What Rocky had seen was his father engaged in a scuffle with two other customers. Fortunately for the two inebriated fans, Rocky never got near the meleé, and it was quickly broken up with no real damage done. His dad, along with other members of the large and close Colavito family, was watching his boy in action. The two drunks began to annoy Rocky's wife, Carmen. When his dad moved in to stop it, the pushing and shoving started.

Later, when it was all over and he had calmed down a bit, Rocky expressed certain regrets. But this was just another example of the kind of impulsive behavior that has not only gotten Colavito into trouble from time to time, but strangely enough, has also helped spur him on to a



WORLD OF ROCKY COLAVITO

place in the front rank of today's big league sluggers.

Despite an occasional side effect of this still-boyish impulsiveness, if there is a player with an ideal temperament to succeed in the fierce hot war of big league baseball, it is the same Colavito. Proud, stubborn and intense, Colavito gives quarter to no man, especially if he is the breed known as enemy pitcher. There isn't a pitcher, right or lefthanded, that Rocky doesn't know he can hit any time in any ball park.

"I've never believed in that right and left business," says The Rock, thereby contradicting most of the best available managerial brains. "To me, big league pitching is all pretty tough—some tougher than others—but, I'll tell you this. There isn't one of them that has my number."

You listen carefully as Rocky tells you this, sitting with him now in his comfortable home in Temple, Pa., and somehow you don't get the feeling of cockiness that you might if any other ball player talked to you like this. But you do get the feeling that Rocky has a kind of granite confidence that is the key to his getting through those times he refers to as "my slow periods." That's Rocky's own special phrase for "slump." He never calls it that. When Rocky gets the collar, even when he's seen a whole string of oh-for-fours and oh-for-fives opposite his name in the boxscore, he never gets down on himself.

"I figure it this way. First, why dwell on it? Why bring it home? That isn't going to help. Second, I'm a big league ball player. Right? I wouldn't be here in the majors if I wasn't. So, I know I'll start hitting again. Maybe the next day I'll get two or three hits and then I'll be on my way again. Because I know it'll work this way I refuse to worry."

Herb Score, once Rocky's roommate when both were with Cleveland and still one of Colavito's closest friends, has always been amazed at Rocky's ability to bounce back after a bad day. "Believe me," Score once told a reporter, "I've never heard The Rock say—even once—'You know, I can't hit this guy.' I've seen him go one-for-twenty and not worry about it."

Another thing that seems to help is that Colavito doesn't monkey around with his stance and batting style when the hits aren't dropping in for him. He doesn't start to analyze, pick apart and search for a key to what's wrong. He keeps going from day to day, knowing that what worked for him once will work again.

Some of his managers have felt that this is Colavito's stubbornness in action. Even the patient Al Lopez began to wonder whether Rocky would ever learn to cut down on his awesome swing, strike out less and get better wood on the ball more consistently.

But if this sounds as though Rocky is suspiciously hard to coach, that's not altogether true. Four men, according to Rocky, have contributed the most toward making him one of the most feared sluggers in baseball today. Ted Williams is one. The others are Hank Greenberg, Tris Speaker and Bob Kennedy. All helped Rocky to be his natural self at the plate.

Early in his career, Colavito had consciously copied his boyhood idol, Joe DiMaggio. The resemblance between them still startles observers—the wide stance, the swing, the build and the sharpness of the line [*Continued on page* 80]

Rocky Colavito

[Continued from page 43]

drives. But Rocky no longer insists on wearing Joe D's old number on his shirt (No. 5). He also realizes that the limitations imposed on his speed because of his incredibly flat feet make any chance of a perfect imitation of the famed Yankee Clipper remote indeed. But, strictly in the power department, Colavito may well exceed his idol before he is through.

Lost in last season's wild Mantle-Maris home-run orgy was the consistent power that Colavito provided the Tigers. His 45 home runs and 140 RBI's kept Detroit very much in the chase until their September confrontation with the Yanks, when the air suddenly went out of them with a rush. Bringing his average up to a respectable .290 (what did Maris hit?), Colavito had his finest major league year. It helped make up for that first year in Detroit, 1960, when, with so much expected, Rocky was able to deliver a disappointing 35 home runs and 87 RBI's with his .249 season average.

Now though, when asked what his goals are for 1962, Rocky smiles a wry little smile, settles back in his chair and tells the questioner that he isn't answering *that* one anymore. You understand that the boyish impulsiveness is, at least in one way, a bit more under control than it once was.

Back in 1958, Colavito was being shuffled in and out between right field and the Cleveland bench as manager Bobby Bragan searched for a winning combination. Rocky, who really wasn't sore at anyone, was just itching for the chance to play regularly. On May 27th of that year he marched cheerfully up to Bragan, and said, "Skipper, you play me every day and I'll guarantee you I'll hit 35 homers this season. Wait a second. Since I've missed so many games already, you'd better make that 30 homers."

Bragan was getting sort of desperate for encouragement, so he quickly said, "Okay, kid, tomorrow you play." Then the manager proceeded to tell a group of eagerly waiting reporters about the incident. In doing so, Bragan neglected to revise the homer figure downward to 30.

Bragan was long gone and Joe Gordon was the manager of record when Colavito came through with the promised number 35. But, because that incident created headlines on most sports pages and added more pressure to a rookie trying to make good, Colavito has resisted all attempts to make him set any more goals or make any more predictions for himself. At least publicly, for the feeling persists that deep down underneath a thoroughly disarming exterior, Rocky has some pretty definite milestones he's aiming at.

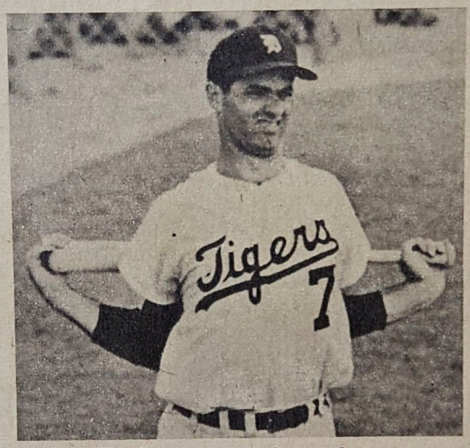
"I'm not satisfied," he repeats over and over again. "I'll never be satisfied. Let's face it—if you ever once get that satisfied attitude, then you might as well forget the whole thing."

And along with this real lack of satisfaction with himself is a constant desire to improve technically as a ballplayer. Here, Rocky's natural intelligence has helped him to wage a determined fight to overcome his natural instincts.

"I love hitting. It's what I'm best at in baseball, I guess. But, if you don't practice the things you're weak at, then you'll never be a big leaguer." So, you'll see Rocky working away at his fielding, testing his incredibly strong throwing arm and, most of all, working on his running, doubtless his greatest single weakness as a ballplayer.

"I'll never be basically any faster, but I try to practice getting a jump on the ball during outfield practice. I also try to get myself away from the plate quicker and make up a stride or two there."

But Rocky Colavito is more than just a combination of muscle and determination and impulsiveness. Perhaps the most important operative in the tense world of Rocky Colavito is pride. That is the force that impels him. That is the emotion that moves him on the field and off. That is the special quality that has helped make him a star. It has made the home runs more frequent, the size of the paycheck greater. Everything, or just



Rocky gets ready to bat.

about, that Rocky says bespeaks the pride of this man.

"The biggest thing in life to me, besides my family, is the fact that I'm a big leaguer. I guess my worst moment in baseball, the one time that I even thought about quitting, was when I got sent back down to the minors in 1956. Maybe I wasn't quite ready like Hank Greenberg told me, but when he said that Cleveland was sending me back to San Diego—well, I started to argue. I told him I wasn't going, not for anything in the whole world. Of course, I was sort of in shock. But then after a couple of days went by I said to myself, 'I'm going to show them what kind of a mistake they made sending a big leaguer down here to Triple A.'"

Rocky did exactly that. He hit 12 home runs in 35 games and batted .368. As Greenberg had promised, he was recalled and finished that season in the majors with a very respectable total of 21 home runs. Rocky's pride had been stung and stung badly. But he reacted with the instincts of a thoroughbred. He fought back with every bit of skill he had. After The Rock explodes, he's ready to go back to work.

With Colavito's pride comes a natural sort of confidence that even helps influence his teammates. After the disastrous four-game set with the Yanks had all but wiped out the Tigers' chances last season, the one man in a Tiger uniform who still genuinely felt it wasn't all over was Colavito. In fact, Rocky, along with those who still glow when remembering the New York Giants' "Little Miracle" in 1951, is one of the few who sincerely believe that a team is never out of it until the magic number reads zero.

This attitude can't help but rub off on disgruntled and less optimistic teammates. They marvel at the sheer willpower that Rocky uses to help propel himself along during the bad times.

Of course what Rocky is probably proudest of is his hitting. Proud and at times a little touchy, too. It isn't surprising, therefore, to find that he doesn't always take a kindly attitude toward an official scorer who, in line of duty, has given a fielder an error on what The Rock feels is a base hit. One veteran of the scoring wars was called on the press box phone between games of a 1961 doubleheader and given the business by an irate Colavito. Said scorer had charged the fielder with an error when Rocky felt he should have been credited with a triple. Despite the tongue-lashing, the scorer remained firm.

After the second game was over, the scorer again got a verbal going-over by Rocky, who insisted that the ruling could still be changed and Rocky given the benefit of the hit. Still no change. Not one to brood, Rocky was all smiles the next time he and the reporter came face to face. But his pride at having hit what he considered a well-earned triple roused Colavito to the boiling point. He just thought the scorer had taken away what was rightfully his. While it may be impossible to get Rocky to talk about his own personal goals, one that he quite publicly cherishes is to play on a pennant winner.

"That would give me the biggest thrill of all, bigger I think than the day I got four homers in succession in Baltimore back in 1959. That's the reason you play this game—to win the pennant. The homers don't matter if they don't get you into that Series."

Again, for another player, this might just be the usual lip service. But for Rocky Colavito, it's a very real emotion. "Be honest," he says. "You have to really want to play this game. You just have to have that desire. Call it being a kid, if you want. But for me there's a good deal more than just going through the motions for the money."

And maybe that's the real key to the tense world in which Rocky Colavito lives. Part man, part kid, filled with a determination to succeed in a business in which few really make it to the top, Colavito moves from day to day in a real, yet make-believe, world. It's a world in which his strong emotions are always in delicate balance, a world in which you have to keep trying just a little harder to make it every single day and make it big. For a person like Rocky it isn't easy, but there's nothing he can do about it. There is no easy way, not the way he plays the game. And just in case you ask him, there's nothing else he'd rather do.

WHAT YOU LEARN IN THE BIG LEAGUES

(Continued from page 18)

and execute them, that defense also is a part of the game, and a thousand and one little things that you brushed off as routine in the minor leagues.

I went to spring training with Cleveland in 1956 after a big season in Indianapolis. We'd finished sixth in the American Association. I'd hit 30 home runs and driven in 104 runs. I thought I was ready to play in the big leagues.

Instead, I did so many things so wrong that by mid-June, Al Lopez—he was the manager that year—had to send me to San Diego. I was so mad I wanted to fight. It was an injustice, I thought.

I went to San Diego and I began to apply what I had been taught in the majors. For the next month, I had the hottest batting streak of my life. In the 35 games, I hit 12 home runs, ten doubles, drove in 32 runs and averaged .368. On July 20, Cleveland righted the wrong I felt I'd suffered. I was recalled, and I've been in the American League ever since.

However, my return to the big leagues didn't mean that I was through learning about this game. My education continued, and it still goes on.

It's a funny thing about baseball. Some things you do instinctively and never have to be reminded of; others you have to be constantly refreshed on. It seems to be carelessness as much as anything else, or lack of thought, and it seems to crop up most unexpectedly on what you would think to be the most routine sort of function.

One day in spring training this year, I was run down between third and home trying to score from second. The next day, manager Bob Scheffing called me out to second base and asked me if I realized what I'd been doing.

"You took a long lead, Rocky," he said, "then you nullified your advantage by leaning toward the base you were coming from instead of in the direction you were going to run. So when the ball was hit, you had to shift weight toward third and start running."

I'd been taught that before, and I know the basics of good base-running. In the first place, I'm no speed demon, and so I have to look for every way to cut a corner on speed.

"Edge off the base," the skipper said, "always leaning in the direction you're going. Don't get so far away you can't get back. You know your own limitations. Make a break when the pitch is made and in case the ball is hit, you're already under way."

Now that's a routine kind of thing, and you'd think that no big-leaguer would ever have to be reminded of it. It's a lot like driving an automobile, I guess. That's all routine, and yet there are so many little things to do that when you forget one or make any kind of a mistake, you're liable to have a wreck.

Haven't you ever unconsciously stopped when the signal light is green, and then started up again when the light turns red? I have. I'll bet everybody that drives a car has done it some time or another, and caught themselves just in time.

That's the way it is with a baseball player. The mistakes that he makes and gets booed for are the same kind of little mistakes that the average person makes in everyday living. The difference is, the average person doesn't have anybody paying to watch him at work.

I've never been a high-average hitter. I'm what some people call a long-ball hitter. At the end of the 1960 season, I had hit 164 home runs and driven in 460 runs in my five years with Cleveland and Detroit. That's what I'm paid to do.

I didn't get that way automatically. I've had as much batting instruction as any young player in the big leagues. (At age 27, I don't consider myself a member of the old guard.) I can name off the people who've helped me with my hitting—Hank Greenberg, Ted Williams, Bob Kennedy, Tris Speaker, Kerby Farrell, Joe Gordon and my older brother, Dom, and I've probably left out a few people I shouldn't have.

I was a slugger before I reached the big leagues. I hit 23 home runs as a green rookie at Daytona Beach in 1951, but my batting average was just .275. I hit 28 home runs at Reading in 1953, and I hit 38 and 30 my two seasons at Indianapolis. But I struck out a lot and I went fishing, as they say, for bad pitches. That was my worse habit as a hitter—impatience, not being willing to wait for the good pitch. Instead of hitting the pitch I wanted to hit, I hit the pitch the pitcher wanted me to hit, and no really good hitter does that.

To some extent, the habit is still with me, but it's not nearly as bad as it used to be.

Greenberg was general manager of the Indians when I first came up. He used to come down out of the office and spend a lot of time standing back of the batting cage helping me. Sometimes I'd come out early and get in some extra practice, and he'd come out with me.

He was not only my boss, but he had also been a great hitter when he was a player. You listen when you have respect for a man's ability. He was never a critical kind of instructor. He would never say don't do this, or don't do that, or why don't you try this. Instead he'd say: "That was a good swing, Rocky. You were in the groove that time." I'd try to get the bat around the same way the next time, and pretty soon I found myself swinging the way I should.

Williams was different. He told me there were five things a fellow had to do to be a good hitter:

(1) Get a good ball to hit.

(2) Keep your eye on the ball.

(3) Wait on the ball; don't lunge at it, in other words.

(4) When the ball reaches the hitting zone, you've got to be quick.

(5) Have a good swing.

Ted never tried to change anything about my stance. He never volunteered any help. He helped me only when I asked him, but when I asked him, he was as willing as could be. He seemed to be proud that other fellows would ask him to help them with their hitting. He's a batting coach with the Boston Red Sox this season, and I'll bet he's a good one.

Early in the 1958 season, I was having a rough time at the plate, a real rough time. I don't remember the exact figures, but the season was about a month old and I wasn't hit-

Kansas City, Cerv was the big slugger there, having been sent to the Athletics by the Yankees. Cerv makes Kansas City his home, and Roger liked it there so much that he bought a home too. He still lives in Kansas City and will tell anyone who will listen why he likes it better than New York City.

In 1960, the Yankees got Cerv back from Kansas City, and the rest of the season Cerv and Maris roomed together on the road. At the end of the season, the Yankees let Cerv go again—in the draft to stock the two new clubs. But by May, they had purchased him back from Los Angeles, and he and Roger were roommates again.

They make a perfect combination. Cerv is six and a half years older, an immensely strong, warm, talkative and thoughtful man, with a huge family of his own. Maris, who has been described as "angry" or "red-necked" or "hot-tempered," is actually something quite different and more pleasant: He is a "griper" in the pure Army sense. The world is full of little details that aren't the way he'd like them to be, and he sees no reason for keeping this opinion to himself. Well, Roger is a "griper" and Cerv is an "explainer"; Roger will tell you what's wrong with anything, and Cerv will invariably tell you why it's wrong.

Cerv was already a good friend of Mantle's. Last May, when the travelling schedule became heavy and the families went back to their homes (Mantle's to Dallas, Roger's to Kansas City), Cerv, Maris and Mantle took an apartment together.

That's when the lifeboat situation reached its peak. Mantle and Maris, subjected to the same endless interviewing and observation, were able to share the hardship with each other. Their home life, at this point, was monumentally unexciting: they played cards; they listened to the large stack of rock-and-roll and hill-billy records that Mickey accumulated; they watched television; they cooked some of their own meals; they drove to the ball park together, usually early; they drove back, invariably late; in New York, their life boiled down to working hours and sitting-in-the-apartment hours, punctuated by some personal appearances and conferences with Frank Scott, their business agent.

They acquired some of the status, and habits, of a vaudeville team. They were seldom asked to do anything alone—pose for a picture, be interviewed, visit someone. Their apartment became a refuge.

And then their similarities, or rather, their complementary qualities, began to count. Neither is particularly talkative—and their silences were congenial (especially with Cerv there to fill them). Each can fully appreciate the deep-burning desire for baseball success, for victory, that the other carries around inside. Both tend to turn in on themselves and brood when things go wrong, and both are perpetually dissatisfied with their achievements, always demanding more from themselves.

Essentially, Maris is a more out-going, cheerful man, with a gift for colorful expression. Mantle is more experienced, more accustomed to the spotlight, and more unhappy internally. Both have a remarkable amount of patience and a surprising amount of down-to-earth humor. Neither has any intellectual pretensions. Mantle loves to play golf, Maris likes to bowl and go hunting and fishing. Their reading is confined mostly to magazines, less to newspapers, rarely books.

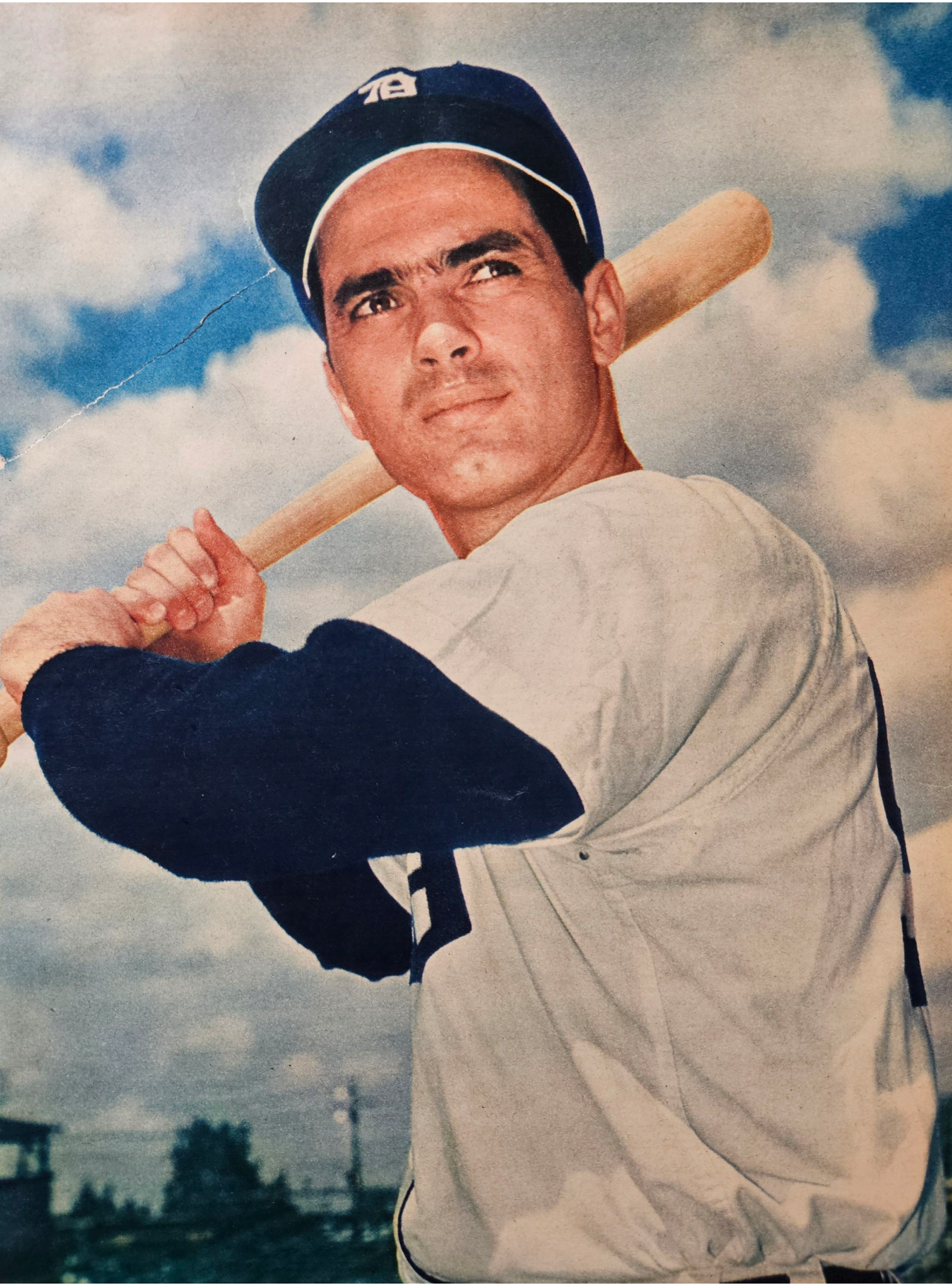
And jealousy?

"Isn't that silly?" says Maris on the subject. "What's so hard to understand? We get paid for winning. Can you imagine what it means to have a Mantle on your side? I hope he hits a home run every time up—it helps me. And I hope I hit a home run every time up too—who doesn't? I want to beat him out in anything I can, and he wants to beat me—but by me doing more, not by him doing less. I'm a lucky son-of-a-gun to have had the two years I've had so far—but I don't have what Mantle has, and don't ever forget it. I'm glad to be his friend and his teammate, and what more can you ask for?"

"People ask me if I root for Roger," says Mantle, "and sometimes I try to answer, but honestly, isn't it a silly question? He's my friend, and he's a great ballplayer, and he does his best all the time, just like I try to do mine. We both root for our team, and for each other, and for all the other fellows on it with us. Playing on opposite sides, we'd do our best to lick the other—and we'd still be good friends for it. If you've been an athlete, you know what I mean. If you haven't, it's hard to put into words."

So let's leave it at this: Here are two extraordinary men, thrown together by circumstance, who find a great deal of congeniality in one another and out of their sympathy and similarity, develop a full friendship. Each has other, closer friends; each will go his own way when circumstances separate them; they will have, from time to time, differences—and you can depend on it that the differences will be exaggerated.

But they're young, successful working together, enjoying life, and each thinks the other is a fine fellow and a great ball player. They could be right.

Roger Maris said this about Mantle in a special interview: "He's just about the best all-round ballplayer there is . . . period. When have you ever seen a better switch hitter with such power? He's also a great fielder and a helluva good base runner, although he doesn't think so himself. And he's got guts—the way he plays most of his games all bandaged up amazes me."

Later Mantle commented on Maris. "He is the most natural home-run swinger I've ever seen. He seems to have just the right arc to his swing. It's really a gift. I honestly get a kick watching him at the plate. But in addition to his hitting, I think he is underrated as an outfielder. He's really a superior fielder, in every way. He's fearless—he'll leap right into the stands after a ball."